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COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

Note verbale dated 8 September 1997 from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations has the honour to forward herewith, in its capacity as the current Coordinator of the Economic Cooperation Organization Contact Group in New York, a copy of the text of the Final Declaration of the Extraordinary Summit Meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization, held at Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on 13 and 14 May 1997.

It would be highly appreciated if the text of the present note verbale and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 34 of the provisional agenda.

* A/52/150 and Corr.1.

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ANNEX

Ashgabat Declaration on the development of transport and communication infrastructure and network of transnational pipelines in the Economic Cooperation Organization region

The Extraordinary Summit Meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was held at Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on 13 and 14 May 1997. The meeting, presided over by Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov, President of Turkmenistan, was attended by: Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan; Mr. Heydar Aliyev, Azerbaijani Republic; Mr. Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran; Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan; Mr. Apas Djumagulov, Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic; Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan; Mr. Süleyman Demirel, President of the Republic of Turkey; and Mr. Islam Karimov, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The Heads of State and Government held, in a cordial and brotherly atmosphere, an exchange of views on issues of common interest in the fields of transport, communication and energy. In this context the Heads of State and Government,

Mindful of the provisions of the Treaty of Izmir, the Quetta Plan of Action, the Istanbul Declaration, the Islamabad Declaration, the Ashgabat Declaration of 1996 and the emphasis in the Economic Cooperation Strategy for the ECO region on pursuing the stipulated goals in the priority areas of trade, transport, communications and energy, focusing in particular upon the provision of measures to facilitate the transit of energy, oil and gas pipelines and other energy resources as well as their access to international markets,

Reaffirming their resolve to build and strengthen the infrastructure linking the ECO member countries to each other and with international markets through viable road, railway, sea and air connections and routes as well as networks of oil and gas pipelines,

Reiterating the concern for accelerating the process of regional cooperation in the priority areas of transport and communications, trade and energy as underlined in the Ashgabat Declaration adopted during the Fourth Summit Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the States members of ECO,

Expressing satisfaction at the completion of important projects and programmes and the conclusion of arrangements envisaging multilateral cooperation in the fields of transport, communications and energy,

Considering the urgency of the expeditious implementation of the remaining projects and programmes for the development of the transport and communication sectors within the framework of the Almaty Outline Plan,

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 48/170 of 21 December 1993 and 49/102 of 19 December 1994 underlining the problems arising out of the geographical location of Central Asian States, and subsequently the positive affirmation made by the Assembly in its resolution 51/21 of 27 November 1996 incorporating the world body's acknowledgement of the potential and resources of ECO as a "permanent body for intraregional cooperation, consultation and coordination in order to enhance economic, social and cultural development", the concrete steps undertaken so far to provide the landlocked countries of the region further access to other regions and the need for various entities of the United Nations system to join efforts towards the implementation of economic projects and programmes of ECO,

Endorsed the following to reiterate and incorporate their commitment to promoting the well-being of the peoples of the ECO region through concerted efforts in the transport, communication and energy sectors:

1. The Programme of Action for the ECO Transport and Communication Decade and the construction of oil and gas pipelines in the ECO region must be recognized as an urgent need and a priority goal.

2. To evolve a mutually agreed tariff policy and to seek harmony in technical standards for railway transport in the ECO region, recommendations may be formulated by the concerned experts of the respective countries to ensure the successful development and effective operation of the trans-Asian railway and to facilitate expansion of trade, tourism and economic cooperation among ECO countries.

3. The inauguration of the Tejan-Sarakhs-Mashhad railway line to link the Central Asian member countries and Azerbaijan to the ports on the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea as well as with European countries through road and railway connections to Black Sea and Mediterranean ports via Turkey and the finalization of arrangements to use the Karakoram highway for commercial and trade exchanges among member States are positive developments. Existing expertise and resources in the ECO region must be mobilized to complete the interconnection of road and railway routes, including the construction of missing links.

In this regard, the concerned authorities in the member States may undertake necessary measures towards completion of remaining road and railway links within the ECO region as envisaged in the Almaty Outline Plan, providing Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with access to adequate seaport facilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, giving special priority to the transit roads connecting Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with the ports of Karachi and Gwadar through Afghanistan, in accordance with their mutual agreements.

Similarly, priority should be given to the completion of the Kerman-Zahedan, Bafq-Mashhad and Kars-Aktas-Boyuk-Kasik-Baku railway lines, as well as to the expeditious implementation of feasibility studies, surveys, engineering and construction works and upgrades in the Kushka-Herat-Kandahar-Chaman, Termez-Khairation-Mazar-i-Sharif-Herat-Kandahar-Chaman, Andijan-Torugart, Eralieve-Turkmenbashi-Gazanjyk-Bandar-Turkmen, Astara (Azerbaijan)-Rasht-Qazvin,

Chahbahar-Zahedan and Arak-Khosravi railway lines, the Kuliab-Kalay-Khumb-Khoroz-Murgab-Karakoram highway and the Almaty-Bishkek-Torugart-Gilgit-Hassanabdal, Andizhan-Osh-Irkeshtam, Nizhniy Pyandzh-Sherkan-Bandar-Kabul, Beneu-Akjigit-Kungrat-Khojeylli, Termez-Hairatan-Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Jalalabad-Peshawar-Karachi and Herat-Frah-Kandahar-Quetta-Karachi-Gwadar roads, connecting Ashgabat with the ports of Karachi and Gwadar and passing through Sinboldok-Kandahar-Herat, and the road linking Termez with Herat through Shebergan-Maimana, the Kerman-Ravar-Deyhuk, Kerman-Shahdad-Nehbandan-Zabol, Poldasht-Marand-Urumieh-Sanandaj-Khorramabad-Ahvaz-Khorramshahr-Abadan-Bandar Imam roadway, the Miyane-Ardebil-Parsabad (Iran)-Imishi (Azerbaijan), Sadarak (Azerbaijan)-Kars (Turkey), Balykchi-Osh-Andizhan, Baku-Guymyzy Korpu-Hopa-Trabzon highway and the construction of road bridges across the Amudarya River in the Farab district.

The Ministers of Transport, at their meeting to be held at Ashgabat in December 1997, shall review and finalize the above routes as part of the Programme of Action for the ECO Transport and Communication Decade.

4. Concrete steps must be taken to expedite the development and operation of the Istanbul-Tehran-Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tejan-Charjev-Tashkent-Almaty-Aktogai-Durzbha trans-Asian railways, known as the "Silk Railway Route", and the Ashgabat-Turkmenbashi-Baku route of the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia project to promote international trade and sociocultural interaction among the people of the region.

5. In view of the urgent need for the development of the ECO region's rolling stock, close cooperation among ECO member States must be promoted for manufacturing and repairing locomotives, passenger carriages, freight cars, containers and other railway equipment, using the ECO countries' own resources as well as preferential credits of international financial institutions issued under the guarantee of the Governments of ECO member States and other financial sources.

6. The possibility of establishing regional consortiums to develop ECO road and railway networks and road infrastructure in conformity with international standards may be examined by the concerned experts in the member States and submitted for consideration during the next ECO Summit Meeting.

The conclusion of an agreement between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan for the establishment of a consortium under the chairmanship of Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov, the President of Turkmenistan, to construct a railway link on the Eralieve-Bekdash-Turkmenbashi-Bandar-Turkmen line or the Ozen-Gyzylgaya-Gazanjyk-Bandar-Turkmen line of the north-south transport corridor is a concrete input to regional cooperation. Other ECO member States may also consider participating in order to extend the scope and positive results of this venture on a multilateral basis.

7. The operationalization of the ECO Shipping Company signifies the potential that the ECO region possesses in developing and promoting the trade and commercial relations of the member countries with each other as well as with other regions. Those member States which are not signatories to this project

may consider the possibility of joining it and offering assistance and facilities to ensure the efficient and successful operation of the Company.

8. In order to facilitate the operationalization of the ECO air project for the movement of passengers and cargo, those member States which are not signatories to this project may facilitate its proper, efficient and successful operation.

9. Since the Trans-Asian-European fibre optic system, linking all the countries of the region, is expected to be operational in 1997, the Advanced Cargo Information System as well as the automated system for customs data (ASYCUDA) of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which is compatible with other systems, may be introduced in each ECO member State with the technical assistance of UNCTAD and the United Nations Development Programme.

10. The formulation and finalization of the draft transit transport framework agreement should be expedited with the technical assistance of the Islamic Development Bank, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and UNCTAD.

11. To promote trade within the ECO region, ECO member States should finalize the establishment of their guaranteeing associations in accordance with the provisions of the Customs Convention on International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (1975).

12. With the completion of requisite formalities, the ECO Transit Trade Agreement shall come into force in the near future. In this regard, the establishment of the Committee on Transit Trade during 1997 at Ashgabat would facilitate commercial interaction and flow of goods within the ECO region.

13. With its rich natural resources in the fields of oil, gas and electricity, trained manpower and infrastructure, the ECO region has the potential and resources to become one of the prosperous regions of the world. Regional cooperation in these fields and maximum utilization of the existing resources and potential of ECO member States will promote complementarities of their economies; enhance productivity, technical and economic viability and optimal utilization of energy supply and contribute to the improvement of the ECO region's socio-economic environment.

In pursuance of the above, a high-level expert task group should be set up to recommend within a specific time-frame measures for the expeditious implementation of agreed projects, to determine viable future routes within the overall regional perspective and to suggest policy courses envisaging oil and gas pipelines providing landlocked oil- and gas-producing ECO member countries with safe, stable and economically expedient access to international markets within as well as across the ECO region, according to bilateral and multilateral agreements.

14. Ensuring a meaningful development of economic cooperation and providing the landlocked oil- and gas-producing ECO member countries with access to world markets is to be recognized as an urgent need. In this regard, the possibility

of the establishment of regional consortiums to construct the following oil and gas pipelines may be considered:

Oil pipelines

- Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan;

- Central Asia to the Persian Gulf via the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Gas pipelines

- Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey-Europe;

- Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan via Afghanistan to Pakistan.

In addition to the above routes, Turkmenistan has proposed a new gas pipeline starting from Turkmenistan to East Asia via Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan as well as from Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan through the Caspian Sea and to Turkey, which should also be considered by an ad hoc committee as soon as possible.

In this regard, ECO member countries may also furnish competitive and economically profitable projects envisaging oil and gas exploration, development and transportation to the ECO secretariat, which shall arrange and coordinate an ad hoc committee to examine and prepare a framework document including agreed technical and other policies in the field of oil and gas transportation and submit it to the ECO at its next summit meeting.

15. In order to promote the safe and effective parallel functioning of power systems of the ECO member States, and bearing in mind the decisions contained in the Quetta Plan of Action adopted in February 1993, the parties endorse the establishment of a joint power system in the region.

16. The parties agree to establish the Permanent Conference of ECO on transport and communications. The mechanism of functioning of this permanent body, based at Ashgabat, shall be worked out and adopted by the Council of Ministers of ECO member States.

The participating Heads of State and Government expressed their gratitude and profound appreciation to the President of Turkmenistan and the Government and people of Turkmenistan for the warm welcome and gracious hospitality extended to them during their stay and for the excellent arrangements made for the Extraordinary Summit Meeting.